

Frankly, that is why it is so important that we fight back to get tax relief for the people that we represent, to make sure they can afford to live in our States and that we have a good tax base to be able to have great schools and stand by law enforcement, firefighters, and others.

Mr. SUOZZI. Madam Speaker, Mr. GOTTHEIMER has been a great champion on this issue. I am grateful to him for pointing that out.

I know, in the case of my State of New York, in the past 5 years, New York has sent \$150 billion more to the Federal Government than they have received back in Federal services or Federal contracts, whereas MITCH MCCONNELL's State in the past 5 years, this same period, they have received \$150 billion more in services and contracts than they have put back into the system.

The gentleman's advocacy on this issue has been stellar. I am grateful to him for being here tonight.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Madam Speaker, I thank Congressman SUOZZI for putting together this Special Order hour.

Mr. SUOZZI. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the time that my colleagues and I have had tonight to make these different points.

I want to close by saying this is about fairness. It is not fair.

It is not fair that the State and local tax deduction has been in place for over 100 years so State and local governments have relied on this deduction in order to fund the programs that we have.

It is not fair that people are being taxed on taxes that they have already paid.

It is not fair that the taxes that are being paid in these States are no longer deductible on people's income tax returns.

It is not fair that, after all these years of relying on this deduction, it is no longer in place, and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been boasting about people leaving my State and going to their States while we are, in fact, subsidizing those very States.

This is a battle that is going to continue. Hopefully, over the next few months, we will be able to build a coalition, together, of Democrats and Republicans who recognize that this unfairness has to be addressed and that we need to restore the State and local tax deduction for the benefit of the residents of my State and people throughout the United States of America who are relying on basic fairness.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CICILLINE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of ending the cap on State and Local Tax deductions—better known as the SALT deduction.

For more than 100 years, an idea dating back to Abraham Lincoln, the SALT deduction has allowed families to deduct taxes already paid to state and local government from their federal tax returns.

Many middle-class Americans benefit from this commonsense tax policy every year. In

past years, almost a third of Rhode Islanders have claimed the SALT deductions, including almost 60 percent of people in my district who make between \$75–100,000 per year.

The destructive 2017 Trump tax cuts, however, imposed a \$10,000 cap on SALT deductions, meaning that if a family pays more than \$10,000 in state and local taxes, the taxes paid in excess of that \$10,000 can no longer be deducted from federal returns raising those families' tax liability significantly.

It just doesn't make sense to have Americans, especially middle-class families living in states with high tax rates, pay extra taxes on the taxes they have already paid.

Most middle-class Americans living in high tax areas are there so their children can go to high caliber public schools or receive better programs.

Many of them made 10, 20, and 30-year investments in home ownership in these high tax areas, relying on the SALT deduction that had been in place for more than 100 years when budgeting for this big expense.

Then they had the rug pulled out from under them and were told they were suddenly liable for thousands of dollars more in taxes per year. For many of these people, that extra tax is a significant portion of their annual income.

These Americans are working hard to give their families the best life possible. Putting a secondary tax on the taxes they have already paid will force many middle-class Americans to struggle.

In fact, middle-class Americans have said that the SALT Cap will, quote: "wipe them out" by forcing them to pay those extra federal taxes in addition to state and local.

This is why I cosponsored H.R. 613, the SALT Deductibility Act, this Congress.

This bipartisan bill would reverse the 2017 law and allow Americans to use the SALT deductions when paying federal taxes without a \$10,000 cap, keeping money in the hands of American working families.

I applaud Congressman SUOZZI for introducing this important legislation. It will have a significant impact to help American families, which is especially important after the devastating economic effect of COVID-19 that has left so many middle-class Americans struggling financially, including many Rhode Islanders.

The 2017 law was more than a mistake, it was bad policy, and I hope that this body does the right thing by taking action to correct it.

SUPPORTING STRONG NATIONAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of strong national security policies, policies like the remain in Mexico policy, enforcement of our existing interior immigration laws, and the completion of key miles of fencing and technology that protect our southwest border—policies, Madam Speaker, that President Biden hastily removed on his first day in office, without any plan to replace them.

President Biden and the Democrats in the House and Senate supported end-

ing those Trump-era policies. Those policies, Madam Speaker, were working to rein in the flow of illegal immigration.

Now, with no plan and no substitution, the result is pure political theater, simply because those were Trump policies. While they were working, President Biden stopped them.

President Biden appointed Vice President HARRIS to serve as the border czar. One would think that she would act in critical ways to replace those national security policies that were working under the Trump administration and that President Biden ended. Not only did she not present solutions to the historic number of hundreds of thousands of immigrants who were pouring across our southern border, but she refused to visit the border for nearly 100 days since being appointed border czar.

She even laughed at the idea of visiting the border, comparing it to taking a trip to Europe. Finally, after cries from the American people and calls from House and Senate Republicans, she did agree to take a trip to the border.

Madam Speaker, I have been to the border seven times over the past 5½ years, most recently in April. Specifically, I traveled to the Rio Grande sector in the Rio Grande Valley. The conditions I found there were worse than I have seen on my previous trips. In fact, Border Patrol estimates that the drug cartels in Mexico made \$400 million in February alone in human trafficking.

Think about that, Madam Speaker: \$400 million in one month by charging \$5,000 to \$9,000 to traffic hundreds of thousands of people across the border, some innocent, some not.

These drug and human trafficking challenges are just part of the crisis at the border because while Customs and Border Patrol are working on the humanitarian elements of this crisis, drugs are coming across the border and criminals are coming across the border.

In fact, Madam Speaker, we have interdicted in the first 6 months of this year enough fentanyl to kill all in America. It is shocking that we have interdicted that much fentanyl drug that it could kill everyone in this country because it only takes the amount in a Sweet'N Low packet, Madam Speaker, to kill 500 Americans. This is a deadly drug.

The Vice President chose to visit El Paso. El Paso is nearly 1,000 miles west of the Rio Grande Valley, where this crisis has its epicenter. If she had gone to the Rio Grande Valley, she would have seen cartels dropping off migrant families by the dozens and holding camps for migrant families struggling to get the water, time, and care that they need.

Regardless of who designed the policies, the Biden administration should be for stronger national security policies on the border. But the Biden border crisis is out of control, and it is going to take more than a short public relations visit to El Paso to fix it.

I encourage the Vice President and the administration to come to the table with Republicans in the House and Senate and implement strong national security borders and reform our broken illegal immigration system.

ANNOUNCING AMERICAN HOSTAGE TASK FORCE

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce that the Congressional Task Force on Americans Wrongfully Detained Abroad has been initiated by Congressman TED DEUTCH from Florida and myself.

The inspiration for me to form this task force was Majd Kamalmaz, a former resident of central Arkansas who was traveling to Syria to attend a family funeral where he was wrongfully detained and has been held in Syria ever since. I am dedicated to bringing him home safely to his family.

Having a loved one detained or held hostage abroad is unimaginable. It is a heartbreaking experience for any family.

Representative DEUTCH and I created this task force not only to help these struggling families but to be a resource for our colleagues in the House, as there are over 50 families here in America who are struggling with a member of their family held abroad. We want to help Members of Congress help their constituents cope with this issue.

Every channel of the United States Government should be working to bring these Americans home and to disincentivize the wrongful detention of Americans in the future, by state actors or nonstate actors.

Madam Speaker, I am committed to bringing Majd Kamalmaz home to his family. TED DEUTCH and I are committed to using this task force to bring other Americans wrongfully detained home, into the arms of their loved ones.

MARKING 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF CCP

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, a century ago, the Chinese Communists took control of one of the great countries in global history. The Chinese Communist Party marks, this month, a century since the beginning of China's descent into authoritarianism.

Just as the Chinese Communist Party used violence to impose its will onto the Chinese people during the Chinese Civil War, now it uses that same violence and threat of violence to crush any dissent within its borders.

We saw this last summer, when the CCP silenced the democratic voices of Hong Kong, swiftly marching troops into the city to stop demonstrations for freedom. Beijing has blatantly ignored the terms of its 50-year treaty with the United Kingdom and ignored Hong Kong's legislature, arresting pro-democracy activists and lawmakers en masse and crushing a long history of press freedom with the recent closing of Apple Daily.

As I speak, over a million Uighurs and other Muslims have been interned in concentration camps for reeducation. Families have been separated, lives destroyed, and cultures all but

erased in the name of the magnificent Chinese Communist Party's ultimate authority.

Respect for human rights is a fundamental tenet of American foreign policy. The continued suffering of the Uighurs, the citizens of Hong Kong—and all other individual rights of speech, privacy, assembly, and religious belief are trampled by the Chinese Communist Party.

It is no 100-year celebration here on the House floor, Madam Speaker. The American people stand with the hardworking people of China. The Congress of the United States stands with the hardworking people of China, and we will work to continue to advocate for freedom of people, assembly, belief, and press in China.

APPLAUDING FBI CYBER BUSTS

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the tireless dedication of members of the FBI in recently seizing approximately \$2.3 million from the hacker group responsible for the Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack.

After the Colonial Pipeline paid the hackers the entire \$4.4 million ransom, and with the money seemingly lost forever due to bitcoin encryption, these FBI agents were able to recover more than half of the demanded sum.

I am also proud to recognize that the FBI conducted 800 arrests in 16 countries thanks to an encrypted messaging app it developed as part of a 3-year digital sting operation on international crime.

Just as encrypted, untraceable communications have become pervasive in how criminal enterprise operates on a global scale, ransomware attacks have been on the rise as they prey on the digital vulnerability of our businesses and infrastructure, often with little hope of recovery or justice.

I applaud the vigilance and ingenious methods of the investigating agents and encourage their continued efforts to ensure safety in our digital age.

REINTRODUCING COPTIC CHRISTIAN RESOLUTION

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my resolution, H. Res. 117, which calls on the Egyptian Government to end the culture of impunity for attacks on Christians and to undertake the arrest, prosecution, and conviction of individuals who carry out attacks on Copts and other Christians in Egypt.

I was the lead on a nearly identical resolution in previous Congresses. I truly appreciate the support I received from my original cosponsor, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE), and nearly 50 of my House colleagues who have cosponsored the resolution in this Congress.

Madam Speaker, Egypt and the United States are important partners in the fight against terrorism. Egypt's role at Camp David has led to some of the closest ties between the United States, Egypt, and Israel in their history, and we are grateful for their most recent engagement between the terror

group Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the Government of Israel.

Madam Speaker, I respect President el-Sisi and his good relationship with the Coptic Pope. He has attended Mass on multiple occasions. He has had some churches reconstructed, and he has constructed the largest Christian cathedral in the Middle East in the new administrative center in Egypt. And President el-Sisi is relentless in holding terrorists accountable for their atrocities.

□ 2045

People all around the world, regardless of their religious affiliation deserve the same freedom to practice their chosen religion like we have enjoyed here in the United States for more than 200 years.

The respect for human rights and religious freedom is a fundamental tenet of American foreign policy. I will continue to advocate for the Coptic Christians and all Egyptians, be they Christian or Muslim, who together take their water from the Nile.

ARKANSANS SHOULD CHECK THE STATUS OF THEIR PASSPORTS

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge all Arkansans to check the status of their passports well before traveling.

Due to backlogs in the State Department, passport renewals by mail are taking longer than usual. There is a backlog of up to 10 weeks for their expedited service and 18 weeks for their regular service.

This lag in service at the State Department is affecting Arkansans wanting to travel for mission trips, study abroad, or take a family trip in the aftermath of the pandemic.

So far, my office has helped 70 people this year receive their passports, and we have opened more than 90 cases in the past 6 months. And this compares to opening cases and receiving passports of only about 200 in the 5 previous years.

So, to my friends in Arkansas, check your passport prior to your trip, and if it is expired, get it renewed as soon as possible.

I encourage everyone to stay up to date on passport services and travel advisories and to check COVID-19 protocols, masks, testing, and quarantine issues before you travel.

ARKANSANS MUST GET VACCINATED

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to encourage all Arkansans who are not currently vaccinated for COVID-19 to consult with their doctor about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

The best way to combat the spread of these COVID variants is by receiving the vaccine. As more information and research develops around the delta variant of the coronavirus, I want to ensure that all Arkansans stay safe and remain healthy as we prepare for this spread.

The only way that we can fully reopen our economy and get truly back on our feet is with more people being vaccinated for COVID-19.

Each FDA conditionally approved vaccine is backed by science and doctors who have worked hard over the past year to develop, manufacture, and distribute these critical vaccines.

So work with your physician. Help protect your family and the Arkansas community by getting a vaccine shot soon.

RECOGNIZING GREAT OUTDOORS MONTH

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize that June is Great Outdoors Month and recognize the great conservation work of my colleagues in Arkansas in the Governor's office and at the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism.

As a lifelong outdoorsman living in The Natural State, I have a lot of pride in recognizing June as Great Outdoors Month. For 9 generations, my family has lived in Arkansas and enjoyed the extraordinary natural beauty throughout our State.

I agree with many of the earliest conservationists in protecting our wildlife and our wild places and that can be done through reasonable and realistic means, and I am proud to continue my work in central Arkansas.

Just last week, I joined Governor Asa Hutchinson and Secretary of Parks and Tourism Stacy Hurst in announcing the new Office of Outdoor Recreation and the addition of a great new wild place in central Arkansas: Blue Mountain just west of Pinnacle Mountain. Just west of Rattlesnake Ridge, Blue Mountain will be a new opportunity for hiking, mountain biking, and enjoying the extraordinary view of Lake Maumelle from the Nature Conservancy and the Arkansas Department of Heritage's latest partnership to expand outdoor recreation.

In the same announcement, the Governor announced that our parks and tourism department would work with the Ouachita National Forest and open up Lake Sylvia Recreation Area and the old Camp Ouachita to year-round participation by Arkansans. This is a great partnership between the Federal Government and the State government to offer more outdoor recreation opportunities for our families to enjoy in The Natural State.

THE NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER MUST GO DIGITAL

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring awareness to the difficulty for many to obtain a critical document for our veterans: That is their form DD-214.

You can't do anything as a veteran without a copy of your DD-214. This paperwork is required to verify for our servicemembers their benefits, how to obtain a disability claim, funeral service, research about lost medals. We need a copy of your DD-214.

Well, the pandemic has not been good for this need for the millions of veterans in our country. The National Personnel Records Center shut down, and as we come out of the pandemic when our veterans need these resources, they are still terribly behind,

despite Congress appropriating more money.

It is critical that the National Personnel Records Center go digital so that we can properly verify these servicemembers and give better service for those who have served their country in such a valuable way.

It should not be difficult for our veterans to get their DD-214 to pursue their benefits or claim healthcare at our Veterans Administration. It shouldn't be a burden to a spouse, to a family of a fallen veteran to have the proper paperwork to have a proper funeral.

So I urge my colleagues to join me and continue to press the National Archives to improve their service for the bravest men and women and their families.

RECOGNIZING STEVE WELLS

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments and retirement of Catholic High School teacher and longtime friend Mr. Steve Wells.

Mr. Wells has been teaching at Catholic High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, for 38 years. His decision to end his long service at the school, having graduated there in 1973, is recognized by many as the end of an era at CHS.

Steve's a native of north Little Rock and came back to the school as a substitute English teacher in 1983. The teacher for which he was substituting never returned, and Steve Wells has been teaching there ever since.

When you walk into our beloved Catholic High there is a quote that is above the front door. It says: "Come boys, so that you may become men."

Mr. Wells did exactly that. And he served as a teacher and a role model for generations of students throughout the years.

I congratulate my friend, Steve Wells, on a dedicated career of helping boys become men and wish him the very best in his retirement.

RECOGNIZING ARKANSAS' WOMEN VETERANS

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, today I rise in honor of Women's Armed Services Integration Act. I am proud to recognize the more than 20,000 women veterans in Arkansas.

Women have been serving in the military in different capacities for more than a century. Women like Deborah Sampson, who fought in the Revolutionary War, and Loretta Walsh, America's first official enlisted woman of any service.

They pioneered the way for women to serve in the United States Armed Forces. And with more women serving now than ever before at any time in our history, action is being taken to continue and build a positive environment for women in the armed services. Further, our Veterans Administration continues its efforts to enhance families, facilities, and services for our growing number of female veterans in Arkansas.

I thank the women of our armed services for their dedication and service to our country.

RECOGNIZING GRACIE LEE, ALYSSA HUIE, RANDILYNN STRIPLING, AND CATHERINE MILLS

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize four incredible young women on the Clinton Arkansas Future Farmers of America team.

Together, Gracie Lee, Alyssa Huie, Randilynn Stripling, and Catherine Mills made history by being the first all-female team to win not one, but two State competitions in electricity.

Due to the pandemic, the team was allowed to compete in the State contest a second time, making them back-to-back State champions in electricity.

This team serves as a great example to all the young Arkansans that are committed to working hard and being pioneers in their fields. I applaud them for their diligence and determination.

This team demonstrated great dedication, and I am incredibly proud to represent these history-making young women and all young Arkansans in central Arkansas.

RECOGNIZING MELVIN WILLIAMS

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the determination of Little Rock native, Melvin Williams. A terrible and unfortunate injury in high school ended his football dreams. His grades slipped, and Melvin dropped out of school.

Years later, Melvin had earned his high school diploma at a program at Goodwill Industries. The Excel Center at Goodwill is a fully accredited and cost-free public high school in Little Rock for adults 19 and older.

Not only is Mr. Williams now working toward a business degree at the University of Arkansas Pulaski Tech, he is one of Goodwill's newest employees. He is in charge of recruitment and retention at Goodwill.

Goodwill Industries of Arkansas CEO Brian Marsh says, "Melvin is exactly who we need for this role."

I congratulate Melvin on his accomplishments and for being a wonderful representative for Goodwill Industries.

CONGRATULATING ELLIS FREEL

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Miss Ellis Freel on being a recipient of the Congressional Award Gold Medal.

The Congressional Award Gold Medal requires the recipient to complete a minimum of 400 hours of volunteer service, 200 hours of personal development, and 200 hours of physical fitness and 5 days of exploration or expedition.

Miss Freel cites the most challenging obstacle in completing the requirements of being a gold medalist as her 5-day wilderness expedition. Due to restrictions from the pandemic, Ellis had to make adjustments that taught her patience and flexibility.

Miss Freel serves as a wonderful asset to her hometown of Bryant, Arkansas, her college campus at the University of Arkansas and to Arkansas' Second Congressional District.

RECOGNIZING FINALISTS OF THE ARKANSAS
STATE CODING COMPETITION

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the finalists from central Arkansas in the fifth annual Arkansas State Coding competition and a finalist for the Arkansas Computer Science Educator of the Year Award.

The team taking third place at the State coding competition this year was from eStem High School in my hometown of Little Rock. The three-person team included Elijah Keen, Spencer Knight, and Sergio Markin. Each student received a \$29 college savings plan worth \$500, in addition to winning \$4000 for their school.

Also, a special congratulations to Kimberly Raup for being a finalist in the 2021 Computer Science Educator of the Year Award. She teaches at Conway High School, and she received a \$2,500 award for being named a finalist.

Congratulations to these students and to Ms. Raup on their awards, and a special thank you to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock for hosting this event.

It is events like this that allow our central Arkansas students to showcase their coding and STEM talents to show the importance of computer science for our youth.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I bring birthday greetings to our beloved Nation. I rise today to celebrate freedom and independence and democracy right here in the United States.

□ 2100

Madam Speaker, 245 years ago, our brave Founding Fathers gathered together in Philadelphia to sign the Declaration of Independence. And on that hot July, in that stuffy room in Philadelphia, they came together to change world history, to change history here in the United States, and to open up a lifetime of opportunity for generations of Americans yet unborn.

Madam Speaker, what amazes me about that time is that small committee of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, thinking through of how would we break with Great Britain, how would America leave Great Britain.

Madam Speaker, Jefferson was concerned. In his rough draft, he said of Great Britain and the United States: "We might have been a free and great people together."

Those words are not placed in the final copy of the Declaration of Independence, but it shows the struggle that the Founding Fathers had and Thomas Jefferson had as a principal author of how to make that break with a people they had respect for, and a king and a king's policies they despised.

"We might have been a free and great people together."

But think of the momentous feelings they had, the prayers they had every

day on their knees for strength to take on the most powerful country in the world, with the most powerful Navy and military in the world.

As Jefferson said: "... it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another ..." To pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Jefferson, while he didn't include that statement about being partners as a free people going forward, he argued, "we have appealed to their"—the British—"native justice and magnanimity." And they were rejected.

Madam Speaker, think of the bravery there. As the signers of the Declaration, those Founders came together and said in the final closing words of the Declaration of Independence: "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

And they did that for those generations of Americans unborn in this great land.

So 245 years later, we have proven our resilience and our strength once again in coming through the pandemic, defeating COVID-19. And I am optimistic about the future of our beloved country. While it has been challenging over the last year and a few months, but compared to the challenges those Founders faced, compared to the challenges this country has faced many, many times before, we show our strength, we show our true mettle, we pull through as one Nation under God many times before.

So on this Fourth of July, I invite all Americans to celebrate our country's birthday with their friends and family. Honor our cherished freedoms. And may we never forget the sacrifices of those generations before us in public service, in uniform, on the battlefield, who have sacrificed so much so that we may enjoy those freedoms that we have today. God bless each of you and God bless our great country.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ESSENTIAL CAREGIVERS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) for 30 minutes.

Ms. TENNEY. Madam Speaker, I rise before you today to share the heart-breaking stories from Americans around the country, including my own district, who were cut off from their loved ones in long-term care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the next several months in this Chamber, I will share harrowing testimony submitted to my office from these families.

Essential caregivers were prohibited from entering nursing homes, group homes, and other long-term care facilities

to provide an extra level of care and love, which is so desperately needed and deserved by those who call these facilities home.

Over the past year, long-term care facility residents suffered in isolation. Alone, many lost the will to live, and many others deteriorated physically and mentally.

While we cannot go back in time to fix what has been done, we can take steps today to prevent this from ever happening again. If Congress fails to act, we could see thousands more Americans die or suffer in isolation again.

I have introduced the bipartisan Essential Caregivers Act to fight for the rights of our seniors, our constituents living in group homes with disabilities, and anyone who resides in a long-term care facility. This also includes young children with developmental disabilities.

Under Federal law, residents in long-term care facilities have a right to receive visitors at any time. But during the pandemic, this right was curtailed completely. Many residents, including children with disabilities and seniors, were not allowed access to loved ones who had been caring for them prior to the pandemic. This took a tremendous toll on them.

My bipartisan bill addresses this issue by striking a commonsense compromise. It implements a new Federal standard that will end this indignity. This bill permits each facility resident to designate up to two essential caregivers who will be provided safe, reasonable, and transparent access to residents during any future public health emergency.

The Essential Caregivers Act is a compassionate step to ensure the most vulnerable among us never suffer alone again.

Why is this so important?

Because essential caregivers aren't just visitors; they are, as the name implies, caregivers who help with activities of daily living and provide emotional support and companionship.

This care enriches the lives of residents, enhances their well-being, and helps them thrive personally and socially. Without it, residents ultimately suffer. This is exactly what we saw during the 15-month lockdown.

The importance of the essential caregivers in no way diminishes the critical role that facility staff place in residents' lives, which during this pandemic was nothing short of heroic. Essential caregivers simply supplement the care provided by facility staff. They are a force multiplier that enhances the ability of residents to thrive and to live their lives fully.

Importantly, this bill upholds strict safety and health standards to protect residents, staff, and caregivers. Any essential caregiver must comply with whatever health standards are put in place by a facility. This includes requirements for testing, PPE, and social distancing.